

Syphilis Facts

Syphilis symptoms are often indistinguishable from other diseases. Severe health complications can occur if left untreated.

Possible Signs and Symptoms

- Individuals may not have noticeable symptoms, or may mistake symptoms for something else
- Symptoms usually appear between 1 and 3 weeks after exposure
- Painless chancre (sore) on genitals, rectum, or mouth. Can last for several weeks.
- Skin rash (usually rough reddish spots on palms of hand and bottoms of feet or on trunk of body. Usually not itchy.)
- Flu-like symptoms (sore throat, swollen glands, headaches, fatigue, achy muscles)

Transmission

- Oral, anal, or vaginal sex
- Infected mother to newborn during birth

Prevention

- Abstain from oral, anal, and vaginal sex
- Maintain mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested for syphilis and you know is uninfected.
- Consistent, correct use of latex or polyurethane condoms or barriers during oral, anal, or vaginal sex
- If a partner is infected, avoid sexual contact until partner's treatment is completed
- Ensure appropriate treatment of an infected partner

Treatment

- Examination and tests by a health care provider to diagnose and determine best course of treatment
- Treatment includes medications, often penicillin, prescribed by a health care provider
- Follow-up examination can help ensure that treatment has been successful

Complications/Effects if Left Untreated

- Increased risk for HIV infection
- Damage to the major organs including the brain, heart, and liver
- Damage to blood vessels, bones, eyes, and joints
- Paralysis, blindness, and dementia
- Death

If you are infected . . .

- Refrain from sexual contact (oral, anal, or vaginal sex) if you have symptoms
- Seek medical attention, including STD tests
- Take all medication prescribed and as directed
- Make sure all your recent sex partners are notified of their exposure to syphilis
- Refrain from any sexual activity with others until your treatment has been completed

For more information about STDs or about testing and treatment in New Jersey, please call the HIV/STD hotline or visit our web site:

1-800-624-2377

<http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/stdhome.htm>

